According to this policy, Operation Vijay was treated as a war-like engagement and a special welfare package including enhanced ex-gratia compensation of Rs. 10 lakhs to the Next of Kin of the Battle casualties was provided. However, no distinction has been made between Operation Vijay and post-Operation Vijay casualties, in so far as the pensionary benefits are concerned. All war widows would be entitled to liberalized family pension.

Conferring war widow status to widow of soldiers who died before 1st January, 1999

3078. SHRI DHARAM PAL SABHARWAL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the widows of soldiers who sacrificed their lives during various operations before 1st January, 1999 are not being given the status of war widows; and

(b) what steps Government propose to take to remove the disparity and give status of War Widow to the widows of those died before 1st January, 1999?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI B.K. HANDIQUE): (a) No, Sir. When a soldier dies in any operation, there is a system of declaring him as a battle casualty as per the prescribed procedure. Widows of such battle casualties are commonly known as war widows.

(b) Various benefits are given to the war widows/next of kin of the battle casualties depending on the nature of operations.

Submarine deal with France

3079. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has signed a US$ 1.8 billion submarine deal with France recently to acquire six submarines to replace to "fast decommissioning" of India's fleet;

(b) the reasons for Government going in for a single tender and why did it not look at the two other contenders viz. German HDW and Russian Amur class submarines; and

(c) additional benefits that the French Government is giving in this deal when compared to other two companies?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Contracts for the indigenous construction of six French scorpene class submarines at Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL), Mumbai, were signed on 6th October 2005. The total cost of the project sanctioned by the Government is Rs. 18798 crore including Rs. 3553 crore as taxes. The project cost is inclusive of Rs. 2160 crore provided as budgetary estimate for Torpedo, protable Deep Water Noise Range, Base and Depot spares and MDL infrastructure. It also includes the cost of contract between MDL, Mumbai and M/s Armaris, France; MDL and Government of India; and Government of India and M/s MBDA, France.

In 1997, the Government approved construction of two submarines at M/s MDL, Mumbai Though the request for proposals were sent to four firm, *viz.* M/s Thomas CSF, France, VSEL (UK), M/s Kockums (Sweden) and RVZ, Russia, only M/s Thomson CSF, France responded. M/s HDW, Germany was not considered as CBI was investigating certain allegations against the firm. Price negotiations were held with M/s Thomson CSF, France. However, no contract could be signed due to reluctance of the French Government to release missiles for the submarines and inadequate explanation of the cost of programme and logistic package. Thereafter, the Government decided to approve the proposal for the indigenous construction of six scorpene submarines under Transfer of Technology.

In 1999, Government approved long term perspective plan for construction of 24 submarines and acquisition of national competence in submarine building. Out of the 12 submarines to be constructed in phase 1, six are to be of western origin while the other six would be of Amur or other apropriate class. Russian Amur class submarines were not considered as the same were not envisaged for induction under the proposed production line.

The transfer of the build technology of the Scorpene submarines would enable the Indian Navy to undertake modifications and replacement of equipment from third submarine onwards.